

25th September 2010

SPIRIT SUPPORTS MAY GURNEY'S WORKS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

For maximum efficiency, organisations that have a lot of workers in the field need to be able to send information to them and receive their feedback in real time.

The solution chosen by services company May Gurney was the Motorola MC75, sourced and supported by Spirit Data Capture Limited. The devices have already produced significant savings in time, costs and paper – as well as providing real-time visibility of the workforce.

May Gurney is an infrastructure support services company. It is committed to helping its clients in the public and regulated sectors to deliver sustainable improvements to front-line services across the UK. It achieves this by ensuring that road, utility, rail and waterways networks and public buildings are well maintained and that household waste is collected, managed and recycled. Ultimately, these essential maintenance services help to keep the country running.

For the last few years, May Gurney has been using Works Management systems to automate its works order process. However, its output to its field-based operatives and their subsequent feedback was all paper-based. Essentially the company required a flexible and reliable mobile system.

Sourcing a solution

Solutions Manager, Neil Lloyd, comments “Sometime ago, we considered a project that would have used tablet PCs in our vehicles. However, we didn’t proceed due to the size of the units; some health and safety issues relating to where they could be mounted in the cab; and the complexity of the software we were using.

We eventually decided that we needed a rugged handheld device that had a good screen that would be clearly visible outdoors. It also needed to be capable of taking photos as evidence of works that we had completed - and GPS was needed so that we could accurately record positional data. A good warranty was also important to us, due to the demanding nature of our business.

After careful research into the various devices available, we decided that the Motorola MC75 fitted our strategic requirements, so I set out to find suitable suppliers. After contacting various companies, we decided that Spirit Data Capture’s overall approach as a strategic partner was the best fit for our business. They had a good track record in the volumes we required and offered an all-encompassing service.”

The Motorola MC75 Worldwide Enterprise Digital Assistant is a lightweight but rugged mobile computer that incorporates integral GPS functionality, offering super sensitivity and tracking. It also has GSM, Wireless Local Area Network

(WLAN) and 3G Wireless Wide Area Network (WWAN) capabilities. Other key features include a high resolution digital colour camera, a bar code scanner and Bluetooth and IrDA connectivity. It also has a high definition VGA display.

Neil continues: “As we intended to roll out mobile working across our organisation, we needed to ensure that the hardware was both reliable and durable, and that any potential impact on the business would be minimised. It was clear from the start that the MC75 was the best mobile device in its class, with a very good specification and excellent service and warranty conditions.”

May Gurney is able to build mobile applications in house. However, the company needed a much more flexible and scalable solution to meet its needs for rolling out mobile working across the organisation. With the help of Spirit, it chose Global Bay as its strategic partner for Mobile Rapid Application Development.

Global Bay allows the company to build mobile applications rapidly in a modular format so that the functionality can be re-used in new projects. This allows May Gurney to build a suite of components which should make future developments much quicker and easier. The applications are run within a ‘Wrapper’ on the mobile device which allows them to interact with each other and shell out into third party applications, such as Sat Nav etc.

Spirit implemented Soti's Mobi-Control mobile device management system for the remote management of May Gurney's MC75s and HTC PDAs. Spirit also provided a customised training programme for May Gurney's IT support team, which covered the Global Bay mobile software, Mobi-Control device management system and the MC75 hardware. The company continues to provide a technical support and customer care service to May Gurney.

Rolling it out

May Gurney has now rolled out the MC75s to several areas of its business. Firstly, it is using them for two-way work management in the Utilities sector. Gangs receive their work instructions on the MC75 and can view the job pack electronically. This includes all of the data relating to the job they are about to attend - including health and safety information, risk assessments, utility drawings etc.

Status updates from the gangs are fed back in real time to enable visibility of events (such as accepting a job, travelling to a job, on site and work completed). The camera is used for photographic evidence before and after works, and the GPS functionality is used to record the location of the job. The gang also feeds back information about the job, such as the materials used, via the barcode scanner.

The solution is now being developed further as part of the company's

MGConnect™ platform. The rapid application development software enables them to build and configure applications in line with different business requirements. This has allowed the company to quickly roll out its new Asset and Works Management solutions to its Highways sector, with the aim of developing a common platform that can be rolled out across the organisation.

In May Gurney's Environmental Services sector, the MC75s are being used as in-cab devices. They give the crews real time information about the collection rounds on which they are working, including special collections or known problems. The crews feed back information (such as missed collections) in real time, so that the call centre staff has the information needed to deal with customer queries efficiently.

The company also uses the Motorola devices for its Rangers application. They enable field-based personnel to record defects, note details and take photos for evidence. The GPS co-ordinates are also captured, enabling the company to identify defect hotspots on its web-based map.

Reaping the rewards

Neil Lloyd reports: "The workers in the field have taken to the Motorola MC75s very well. Before we chose the devices, we gauged the reaction of a number of gangs by providing them with a demo unit. The early feedback was positive. Through careful roll out and support, the adoption of the devices has been very

good and we now have several hundred in use.

“The Motorola units are working well in tough environments with very few problems. The screen can be viewed easily outdoors, making the device very useable. It’s a great all-in-one package for recording data and photographs and for GPS and barcode data capture.

“In terms of our initial roll out for two-way works management, we estimate that we’ve made a 10% saving by introducing mobile working to one particular contract. Gangs can now pick up their jobs without having to congregate in depots. There has also obviously also been a significant saving in paper. However, regardless of the cost savings, one of the main benefits is the real time visibility of the workforce.”

Ian Cox, Director of IS, May Gurney, concludes: “As our clients are always seeking to increase efficiency, we developed a vision for mobile working. We recognised that we needed to get information to and from our field ‘gangs’ in real time, so that both we and our clients could be instantly informed of any progress. This would give us a clear picture of our workforce as well as saving a lot of paperwork.

“We spent a long time evaluating several systems and organisations and since day one, Spirit has been very attentive to our needs. They also provided us with

a provisioning service for rolling out our builds. They are extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of mobile working and have always been helpful and accommodating.

“We have regular update meetings to discuss new technologies, potential service offerings and best practices with a view to continuous improvement. In terms of support, Spirit has been very efficient in resolving any problems. They have become an excellent strategic partner for mobile working.”

ENDS (1360 words)

Notes for Editors: Spirit Data Capture is based in Preston Brook, Cheshire. The company is an independent mobile computing and data capture house, with an in-depth knowledge of the latest wireless and mobile computing technologies which boost productivity and profitability.

Spirit’s capabilities include software application development, mobile computing technology (e.g. rugged mobile computers), wireless network implementations, maintenance and other services. Its extensive client base includes a diverse array of organisations in the utilities, field service, transport and logistics, healthcare, government and manufacturing sectors.

For more information, please contact Katrina Evans. Tel: 01928 718800
Email: katrina@spiritdatacapture.co.uk Website: www.spiritdatacapture.co.uk

For press information, please contact Phil Allcock at Allcock Public Relations, on: 02380 849953.